

the world to know that the insurgency remains alive and well. They don't want us to know about the violence. They don't want us to know about the bloodshed because they don't want us to know that this troop surge is not working, that it is emboldening rather than crushing Taliban militants.

And here is the richest irony of all. The Taliban, one of the cruelest and most repressive regimes Afghanistan or the world has ever known, has put out a statement tweaking the Afghan Government for an action against the recognized principles of freedom of speech. You know you've run afoul of civil liberties when you've gotten a rise out of the Taliban, which banned everything from the Internet to kite flying to painted fingernails.

Madam Speaker, democracy depends on the ability of citizens to make sound decisions based on open access to information. When we crack down on freedom of the press, we undermine the very foundation of democracy and everything we're fighting for in this war. This episode is just one more reason why we need to bring an end to the conflict and adopt an entirely new national security approach.

A smart security strategy would replace the military surge with a civilian surge. It would defeat terrorism by providing aid and promoting human rights instead of sending troops. And smart security would also have a strong democracy-building component to help principles like freedom of speech and the press to take root in the troubled regions of the world.

We cannot passively accept this decision by the Karzai government to impose a gag order on the media. I urge Secretary of State Clinton and Special Envoy Richard Holbrooke to raise this issue at the highest levels. At a time when Americans are sacrificing so very much, when they're being asked to send their sons and daughters to risk their lives halfway around the world, we owe them nothing less than the unvarnished truth about this war. Now is the moment for more information, not less; the bad news as well as the good news.

AFGHANISTAN WAR POWERS RESOLUTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES. Madam Speaker, last week during the debate on Afghanistan, I spoke on the floor. I was in support of the resolution introduced by Mr. KUCNICH, House Resolution 248, and I used in my remarks an article from Marine Corps Times of November 2, 2009. It says, "Caution Killed My Son: Marine families blast 'suicidal' tactics in Afghanistan." Sadly, Retired Marine First Sergeant John Bernard lost his son Lance Corporal Joshua Bernard, 19, who was killed in Afghanistan; and from that, his concern was

that the rules of engagement have changed to such a point where our military is restricted in certain areas of what they can use in the way of defending themselves.

Well, after I read part of the article on the floor, it really got on my mind about, you know, what are we doing to our military if we're asking them to go to Afghanistan and fight, yet we tell them in certain situations, You cannot use your weapons? So I asked my staff to email a very dear friend of mine who is a retired senior military general. I wanted him to help me understand the rules of engagement. Well, the comments that he sent back really didn't speak to my question of rules of engagement, but I want to share with you part of his email back to my staff.

"As I wrote and mentioned to Congressman Jones before, trying to 'win' in Afghanistan is a losing proposition. You are not dealing with a nation-state, nor are you dealing with state actors. Afghanistan is a tribal country, and we are involved in a tribal warfare. Bottom line: as I told Congressman Jones before, Afghanistan has been too tough a nut to crack for every nation that has ever tried to crack it. We need to figure out a way to honorably pack our bags and get out. It is not in our national interest to be there. Al Qaeda is the enemy . . . not some tribesmen who are loosely affiliated with something called the Taliban. Al Qaeda does not need Afghanistan to attack us. They play 'whack-a-mole' . . . we beat them down in one location and they will pop up somewhere else. Case in point—Yemen. If we want to fight these guys, we need to fight like them. Hunter-killer teams supported by air and artillery . . . set ourselves up in the bad guys' backyard and hit them whenever they show their faces."

Madam Speaker, before I close, I want to say again that I am concerned about the issue of rules of engagement. I intend to write the chairman of the Armed Services Committee and ask for hearings, because it's not fair to send our men and women overseas to fight for this country and then tell them that they're handcuffed. They can only shoot at certain times to defend themselves.

Madam Speaker, with that, before I yield back my time, as you know, I have signed over 9,000 letters to families and extended families who have lost loved ones in Afghanistan and Iraq because I will go to my grave regretting that I voted to send our troops to Iraq. Madam Speaker, I ask God to please bless our men and women in uniform. I ask God to please bless the families of our men and women in uniform. I ask God in his loving arms to hold the families who have given a child dying for freedom in Afghanistan and Iraq. And I will ask God to please bless the House and Senate, that we will do what is right in the eyes of God. And I will ask God to give wisdom, strength, and courage to the President of the United States, President Obama, that

he will do what is right in the eyes of God. And I will ask three times, God please, God please, God please continue to bless America.

THE U.S.-ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ENGEL. Madam Speaker, I rise this evening to reaffirm the strength of the U.S.-Israel relationship. Both of our countries have shared values. Both of our countries are democracies. Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East. I know there have been some difficulties during the past few days.

When Vice President BIDEN visited Israel, there was an announcement of the expansion of a neighborhood in North Jerusalem. The timing of that announcement was wrong, but I don't think that we should blow the timing of that announcement out of proportion. We should not have a disproportionate response to Israel. We need to be careful and measured in our response, and I think we all have to take a step back.

The relationship remains rock solid. The Obama administration and the administration of Prime Minister Netanyahu have been cooperating on a number of things: containing Iran, the Goldstone Report, and making sure that Israel retains its qualitative military edge in the region. And there has been good cooperation between our two administrations, the Obama administration and the Netanyahu administration. But to seem to question the very nature of the U.S.-Israel relationship and to put it in personal terms in a very public way will not contribute to peace in the Middle East. Rather, it's the contrary. It will cause the Palestinians to dig in their heels, thinking that the Americans can just deliver the Israelis.

Last year, when there was public pressure being put on Israel not to expand settlements, there was no simultaneous public pressure being put on the Palestinians, and we saw that the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas just sat back, didn't make any concessions, didn't say that he would do anything positively to further peace talks, and just thought that the United States would wring concessions out of Israel.

The fact of the matter is that the Israelis have been welcoming peace talks with the Palestinians. The Israelis have said they would sit down and have face-to-face talks for peace with the Palestinians. That's what you do when you have peace. Instead, the Palestinians have refused to sit with the Israelis, and Senator Mitchell is proposing to shuttle back and forth between the Palestinian side and the Israeli side to have negotiations, but not direct negotiations.

We need to be careful. If we criticize Israel for doing what we think was